



A Guide to Celebrating and Promoting Older Americans Month 1997

By presidential proclamation, May once again will be celebrated as Older Americans Month in 1997. Older Americans Month is that special time every year when those of us at the Administration on Aging (AoA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and all of our colleagues in the aging network and other aging-interest groups unite to recognize the contributions and achievements of America's older citizens and call attention to the issues that affect them most.

This year's theme is *Caregiving: Compassion in Action*. As the nation's shifting demographics begin to fulfill the promise of an aging society, caregiving-related issues impact a growing number of Americans of all ages with each passing day. The elements of caregiving, as related specifically to older individuals, are as follows:

- 1) **Each day, as many as five million older individuals in the U.S. are recipients of care from more than 22 million informal caregivers made up of family and friends.** Often, these caregivers are the link many older individuals rely on to get the information and assistance they need to live independent and fulfilling lives outside of the formal system of care.
- 2) **Older individuals are often caregivers themselves.** It is estimated that 12 percent of the caregiving population is aged 65 and older. In fact, at least 20 percent of the nation's informal caregiving force is made up of the "young-old" (those 60 and older) serving the "old-old" (those aged 75 and older). Moreover, almost one-third of informal caregivers 65 and older are providing care not for relatives, but for friends and neighbors.

- 3) **Older individuals who are grandparents and other older relatives are more than ever before finding themselves in the role of primary caregiver to a child.** Due to increased life expectancy and the changing dynamics of the American family, it is estimated that 3.7 million children currently live with their grandparents. In over one-third of these cases, the grandparent assumes the role of primary caregiver. In addition, thousands of older individuals care for younger mentally impaired and physically challenged family members every day.

AoA has selected the caregiving issue as the focal point for this year's Older Americans Month promotional effort because it has such a tremendous impact on America's older citizens, as well as their families and friends. This year's Older Americans Month poster is designed to convey a sense of celebration and profound appreciation for the tremendous contribution the nation's caregivers make to improving the quality of life for so many. All of the other information and tools provided in this year's promotional kit—a print public service announcement (PSA), caregiver resources/services promotional flyer and sample feature story—highlight the caregiving issue as well. Special emphasis has been placed on the importance of educating the public about the vital role of caregivers in society and informing caregivers about where they can turn in their own communities to get the support they need, both for themselves and those they serve. By reaching out to caregivers, who are themselves older and/or who care for those who are older, to acknowledge their efforts and offer them assistance wherever possible, we can improve their lives and the lives of those to whom they provide care.



If you have received Older Americans Month materials from AoA in the past, you may notice something different this year. Most of the materials are designed not to mention Older Americans Month '97 specifically. This is because AoA recognizes that we need to be able to promote the caregiving issue and the resources that are available to assist and support caregivers and those they serve, not just during Older Americans Month, but all year long. Of course, the fact that May is Older Americans Month provides us with the news hook we need to grab the attention of the media and ask them to assist us in promoting the caregiving issue and the aging network's resources to the public. However, providing services and information to caregivers and the older individuals they serve is an ongoing endeavor, so a number of the materials have been designed to be timeless in their appeal and usefulness, including the fact sheets, print PSA and flyer. In addition, this year's logo design is provided in two versions, one with an Older Americans Month '97 identification and one without. The key to this year's promotional materials is flexibility, while the key to their being used successfully—during Older Americans Month and beyond—is your creativity.

Introducing the *Caregiving: Compassion in Action* Logo

This year's theme, *Caregiving: Compassion in Action*, provides a rallying point around which all of us can come together to promote the aging network's resources and the caregiving issue during Older Americans Month and all year long. The visual identity and color scheme for the theme have been established in this year's national logo. AoA encourages you to use the logo to identify your local efforts with the national initiative to acknowledge caregivers and inform them of the resources available to assist them and the older individuals they support. As you can see by looking at

the enclosed camera-ready logo sheet, the logo has been provided for your use in a number of sizes, with and without mention of Older Americans Month '97. This approach is intended to provide you with the flexibility you need to use the logo on your materials during May and for the rest of the year, when the designation of Older Americans Month '97 would be out of date.

Black and white versions of the logo have been provided to ensure easy print and photocopy reproduction. If you would like to print the logo in color, the appropriate colors have been clearly indicated on the sheet. To have the logo printed on any one of your publications or on your materials, take the logo sheet to your local printer. Tell the printer whether the logo will be one PMS (Pantone Matching System) color, black and white, or two PMS colors. This year's PMS colors are PMS 294 (blue) and PMS 193 (red), as indicated on the sheet.



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Promoting Caregiver and Aging Network Resources Through Your Local Media

Caregiving, and the impact it has on society and older individuals in particular, is an issue that deserves the attention of the media, both at the national and local levels. Those of us in the aging network know that informal caregivers are at the root of our nation's strength in meeting the everyday needs of older persons. Often, caregivers do not label their efforts as "caregiving" per se, because they view their contributions to the support of a loved one not as a burden but as a duty performed gladly out of love and reciprocity. Therefore, they may not seek out or avail themselves of the services and support that are available to assist them and those for whom they care. In fact, they may not be aware that there are services available to assist older individuals in their own communities, many of which might ultimately benefit the caregiver as well as the recipient of care.

We also know that one of the greatest myths about caregiving is that it is always done by those that are younger for those that are older. The fact is that, as Americans are living longer, the dynamic of who is caring for whom is changing. In fact, studies suggest that as much as 35 percent of America's informal caregiving force is made up of the "young-old" caring for the "old-old." This percentage will only grow with time, as the baby boomers age and Americans as a whole live longer than ever before. In addition, it is becoming more common that older individuals are finding themselves in the role of primary caregiver to a child. As is true for all informal caregivers, these older caregivers often go about their daily lives unassisted and unrecognized for the tremendous contributions they make to their loved ones and society.



One of the most effective ways to enlighten caregivers and let them know that there are resources available to support them in their efforts is to solicit the support of your local media. By placing the caregiving issue in the spotlight, the media will educate readers about the issue and inform them about the aging network's role in supporting those who provide informal care to older individuals. In addition, those who currently (or may in the future) face a critical caregiving decision will know where they can turn for assistance and information. Keep in mind that local community organizations, businesses and religious institutions often have newsletters or bulletins that may be appropriate vehicles for promoting the caregiving issue and aging network resources as well.

The feature article, "*Compassion in Action: A Look at Caregiving in America*," enclosed in this year's kit is approximately 1,160 words long. It has been written for your use in working with your local community newspaper or newsletter to promote the caregiving issue during Older Americans Month. The article cites Older Americans Month as a time to educate the public about the caregiving issue and its impact on society and to inform caregivers that there are services available to assist them and the older individuals they serve—right in their own communities. It sheds light on the issue of informal caregiving in America, explaining what constitutes caregiving, as well as a caregiver, and dispelling the myth that older individuals are always being cared for rather than serving as caregivers to others.

Your local area newspaper or newsletter, depending on its size and policies, may agree to publish the feature story, in part or verbatim, with you or another member of your organization mentioned as its author. However, it is likely that the paper will want to give the story a more local spin, enhancing it with statistics, quotes or photographs from local sources, as well as anecdotal stories about older individuals and caregivers in your area. In addition, the publication will be more likely to run a story if it provides information to its readers about where they can access resources or information on caregiving and/or aging services in their own



community. As the local contact for the publications in your area, you will be asked to provide this additional information. The fact sheets in this year's kit can also serve as critical background information for an editor/reporter who is pursuing a caregiving-related story.

The first step in soliciting the support of the print media to cover the caregiving issue is a pitch letter. A pitch letter is a written "proposal" to a publication asking that it publish a story or pursue a specific story idea. Reporters and editors get hundreds of story pitches each day, so a carefully constructed letter is needed to increase its chances of being read, not thrown away. A sample pitch letter has been included in this guide. It provides you with a framework for crafting your own caregiving story idea pitch letter. We encourage you to use the letter's contents in any way you see fit, but remember that a pitch letter should never be longer than one page. We also recommend that you submit your pitch letter printed on your organization's letterhead, if possible.

Another way to increase the chances that your material is read is to make certain you identify the appropriate editor/reporter at your local paper who might be interested in the caregiving story. The caregiving story would most likely be of interest to a features, social issues or health journalist. Some newspapers actually have a weekly column or section aimed at providing insight on aging-related issues. If you do not know the most appropriate person to target with your pitch, call the newspaper and ask. Make sure to get the correct spelling of the journalist's name, title, mailing address and phone and fax numbers.

At a minimum, your final package to the editor/reporter should contain your pitch letter; the sample feature story; fact sheets on caregiving-related issues, including information about older citizens, aging services, caregiving and caregivers in your area, if possible; and a name and phone number (yours or another appropriate contact) for the journalist to use in obtaining further information for localizing the story. You can enhance your pitch with photographs,

anecdotal stories about local area caregivers and the individuals they help, or quotes from you or others in the community who can speak first-hand about the caregiving issue and the aging network's services.

Once you have sent your package to the publication, call the editor/reporter to follow up. Make certain you give him/her enough time to read the information—two or three days is appropriate. Remember to respect his/her deadlines. If you're uncertain about what times of day are the most frantic for the publication you are working with, ask your contact if it is a good time to talk when you call. Keep in mind that you need to give the media a reason to work with you. Pitch an irresistible story, be prompt in providing support materials and follow up in a timely manner. Then enjoy your success when the local newspaper is delivered!

Reaching Caregivers Using a Print Public Service Announcement

Publications often will donate advertising space at no charge to nonprofit organizations conveying a socially conscious message. Older Americans Month is a great time to solicit the support of your local area newspapers and newsletters or bulletins in promoting the local resources available to assist older individuals and their caregivers. This year's promotional kit contains a PSA slick sheet that you can use for this very purpose, during May and all year long. Please note that the usage rights on the stock photograph featured in the PSA are good for one full year beginning in May, so it can be used as much or as often as you like until May of 1998.

The PSA slick sheet is camera-ready, meaning it is a positive image that can easily be turned into a negative for printing purposes. Because the print PSA contains graphics in addition to type, it should be reproduced exactly to size. Making it larger or smaller could distort



the image. The dimensions of the print PSA are two columns by eight inches, which is a standard size that fits into most any newspaper. A blank space has been provided at the bottom between the text and the public service tagline. This space is for your use in localizing the PSA. It should include the most appropriate organization and telephone contact information for caregivers in your area or region of the country to call for information on the resources and services available to assist them and those they serve.

Remember, timing is critical in successfully placing a PSA. Competition for “free” space is fierce, so you need to start working with your local publications no later than the beginning of the month prior to the month you want placement. The more publications you contact about placing the PSA during May and throughout the year, the more likely it is that one or two will say “yes.” The fact that May is Older Americans Month is something you should mention to encourage the newspaper to donate free space. Reach out to as many local publications as you can to obtain their support. One camera-ready PSA slick sheet will be all you need because a newspaper should be able to photograph the PSA fairly quickly and return it to you so you can give it to another publication to do the same.

To place the print PSA for Older Americans Month ‘97, begin by calling your city or community newspaper or newsletter and asking for the advertising department. If you are asked what kind of advertising you are inquiring about, explain that you are interested in obtaining free space for a camera-ready PSA that informs caregivers about where they can find resources and information to assist them in their efforts. Someone should be able to direct you to the correct contact person.

Tell your contact person that you have a camera-ready PSA with the following dimensions: two columns by eight inches. Tell him or her that you would like the paper to run the PSA during the month of May in support of Older Americans Month, and that the thrust of the ad is to recognize caregivers in your area and inform them where they can go for assistance and

support for themselves and those to whom they provide care. Don’t forget to tell your contact a little bit about your organization and the critical role it plays in meeting the needs of older individuals in your area. You also may want to use the information provided in this year’s fact sheets and feature story to sell your local publication on the magnitude and importance of the issue. Keep in mind that your area newspaper is looking for a local spin on the stories it writes and the services it promotes, so if you have any facts and figures on the impact that caregiving and aging network services have on the citizens in your state, county or community, we recommend you use them to enhance your argument.

Tell the newspaper the PSA has a blank space in which you will need to add your organization’s name and a local or toll-free telephone number where caregivers can get more information. Most local newspapers and other publications will be happy to assist you in localizing your print PSA, especially if you give them advance notice. To match the typeface used in the PSA, ask for Garamond Light Condensed. This is a standard typeface that your newspaper should be able to duplicate or closely match.

If you would like to submit the PSA to more than one publication—and we encourage you to do so—explain that you have only one camera-ready ad slick sheet available. You can offer to deliver the PSA slick sheet to the publication’s offices with the understanding that you will need it back as quickly as possible.

This year’s PSA contains a public service tagline that gives credit to the publication for the donated space. The tagline sends a clear message that the publication supports the efforts of AoA, the aging network and your organization in particular, and that your organization, AoA and the publication are partners in trying to address the needs of area seniors and those who assist them.



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Using a Flyer to Promote Local Aging Network and Caregiver Support Services

This year's promotional kit also contains an 8 1/2" x 11" camera-ready flyer slick sheet, which we encourage you to photocopy on pastel-colored paper—for best results—and to use in promoting resources and support services that assist older individuals and caregivers in your area. Space has been provided at the bottom of the sheet for you to add your organization's name and phone number. Because it is smaller than a standard-size poster, the flyer will not take up much space on the bulletin board at the local library or grocery store. Flyers can be a very effective way of getting out critical information to those who need it. Think creatively about where you might post this information so that people who are caregivers might see it. Here are some locations you may want to consider:

- Schools and libraries
- Community or recreation centers
- Grocery stores
- Drug stores/mini-markets
- Shopping malls
- Banks/financial institutions
- State/county/city office buildings
- Beauty salons/barber shops
- Local businesses
- Corporate office buildings
- Book/music stores
- Restaurants
- Religious institutions
- Doctors' offices/managed care facilities

A number of these organizations will allow you to post a flyer promoting aging network support services and resources for older individuals and their caregivers, especially when you explain that May is Older Americans Month. Posting a flyer is an easy and inexpensive way for the community to promote a service that impacts so many of its citizens.

Conducting Special Events/Activities During Older Americans Month '97

Holding special events/activities during Older Americans Month is always a nice way to recognize the older Americans that we serve specifically and to let them know that we care. These events/activities also provide us with the opportunity to reach out to the public and include others in what we do.

In planning a special event/activity to celebrate Older Americans Month, keep in mind that thorough planning is the key. Create alternative plans for inclement weather if the event will be held outside. Most important, don't forget to make arrangements for people with disabilities. You'll need to make sure your events/activities are wheelchair accessible. Depending on the size and nature of the event, you may need to solicit the support of a volunteer interpreter for the hearing-impaired.

This list provides you with ideas for special events and activities you may want to develop for Older Americans Month this year. The planning and actual steps needed to execute each idea are up to you. You can make each of these events or activities as large or small in scale as you like, depending on the level of community involvement and additional resources available to you. You may want to consider collaborating on some of these activities with other organizations in your area. Think creatively about how you can combine some of these activities for maximum impact.

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- Stage an event where a state or local government official proclaims May 1997 as Older Americans Month and/or presents an award to an outstanding older individual.
- Hold an open house in your facility/office. Invite the facility's neighbors, local officials and celebrities, the media and the public to join you in an Older Americans Month celebration. Offer tours of the facility and provide members of the media with the opportunity to interview a number of people you serve.
- Initiate a state-, county- or city-wide ribbon-wearing campaign to promote Older Americans Month '97. Have your staff and those you serve pass out ribbons—perhaps striped in red, white and blue—that can be pinned on clothing, asking people to show their support and appreciation for older individuals and their caregivers during May. When selecting a ribbon color for this effort, keep in mind that certain colors are already very closely associated with various causes, such as red for HIV/AIDS awareness and pink for breast cancer awareness.
- Hold a resource fair for caregivers in your local area to provide them with the critical information they need to assist those that they care for and the support they themselves need, which will ultimately benefit those they care for as well.
- Implement a program to encourage individual volunteers, school children, church groups or the local animal shelter to share their pets on an ongoing basis with the older individuals you serve. Research has shown that older people enjoy and respond very well to interaction with friendly and loving animals.

- Work with social services agencies, local area school counselors and other appropriate sources to hold a resource fair, workshop or support group for older individuals who are raising children. Faced with a host of very rewarding, yet sometimes difficult challenges, these individuals could benefit from the support and encouragement of the aging network, as well as from those in similar circumstances.

When promoting any event/activity and recruiting participants or attendees, don't forget your local newspaper or newsletter's community events calendar. The local media are usually very supportive of any effort to enhance awareness about important issues or meet the needs of those in the community. Make sure you call your local media contacts to inform them about the date and time of your event; give them the who, what, where, when and how in writing. Ask them to list it on the community calendar well in advance of the actual event date, with a contact name and phone number for people to call who are interested in participating or attending.

Sample Pitch Letter

TODAY'S DATE

Mr./Ms. EDITOR/REPORTER'S NAME HERE

TITLE

PUBLICATION

FULL STREET ADDRESS, WITH SUITE/OFFICE NUMBER IF APPLICABLE

CITY, STATE ZIP

Dear Mr./Ms. EDITOR/REPORTER'S LAST NAME,

By presidential proclamation, May is Older Americans Month. This year's theme is "*Caregiving: Compassion in Action*." The shift in America's demographics as the baby boomers age, coupled with the fact that Americans are living longer than ever before means that caregiving issues are having a tremendous impact on all of us.

Older individuals in America are affected by the caregiving issue in two primary ways. First, five million of them are the recipients of care from more than 22 million informal caregivers, who are often the link older individuals rely on to get the information and assistance they need to continue living at home. The citizens of (YOUR TOWN) are no exception. Just last year, (YOUR TOWN)'s (YOUR ORGANIZATION) received well over (XXXX) calls from caregivers seeking assistance and information. Second, it is estimated that 35 percent of the country's caregiving force is aged 65 or older, countering the perception that older individuals are only the recipients of care. Also worth mentioning is the fact that many older individuals who are grandparents are—more than ever before—finding themselves in the role of primary caregiver to a child.

Thanks to the cumulative efforts of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging, the State of (YOUR STATE) and the national aging network, of which (YOUR ORGANIZATION) is a part, there are services and resources in our community to which older individuals and caregivers can turn for assistance. There is no better time than during Older Americans Month to educate your readers about caregiving and the aging-related services available to assist them.

Enclosed is a feature story about the caregiving issue that I hope you will read and use in one of two ways. You are welcome to use it verbatim, in whole or in part, to educate your readers. Or, you may wish to use it as a background to write your own story about caregiving and the impact it is having on (YOUR TOWN)'s citizens. I have enclosed a number of fact sheets that you may find helpful as well. I also would be happy to provide you with further information or leads on who to speak to for quotes and information about caregiving and aging-related issues, or photographs that depict aging services and/or caregiving in our community. My phone number is provided below.

Thank you for considering this story idea. I will follow up with you in a few days by phone. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance in the meantime.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

TITLE

ORGANIZATION NAME

PHONE NUMBER